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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES ROUNDUP, SEPTEMBER 11-28

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[1](#)B. BAKU 87

Classified By: Acting Political-Economic Counselor Shannon Ross, Reason
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[1](#)1. (U) This cable is part of a regular series that will summarize major ongoing human rights issues in Azerbaijan. This series aims to pull together many different sources of information into one readable biweekly summary of human rights cases, with the aim of giving a fuller picture of Azerbaijan's complex political environment.

Businessman in Psych Hospital for Refusing to Pay Bribe

[1](#)2. (C) On September 11 businessman Mahammad Gurbanov was forcibly placed into the psychiatric hospital in Nakhchivan, reportedly for refusing to pay a bribe. Radio Liberty correspondent in Nakhchivan Malahat Nasibova confirmed the story to Emboff after speaking with Gurbanov's wife. Gurbanov's business involved importing small goods from Turkey, and on his last shipment Customs Department Head Mirmahammad Seyidov asked Gurbanov to pay customs duties on more goods than Gurbanov was trying to import. Gurbanov refused, and the entire shipment was confiscated. Gurbanov then wrote a letter of complaint to the Head of the Supreme Majlis (parliament) of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic.

[1](#)3. (C) On September 11 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Nakhchivan appeared at Gurbanov's home and invited him to the Ministry to solve the problem. Reportedly, Gurbanov was then taken to the Psychiatric Hospital and held there, although there is no official information confirming this. Nasibova said, however, that Gurbanov called to her and other reporters from a window of the hospital, claiming he was forced to sign a document confirming his consent to being placed in the hospital. The following week Gurbanov apparently also told reporters from a window that he was given a mysterious injection against his will. To date, family members have not been allowed to visit Gurbanov. A similar case of forced confinement at the psychiatric hospital took place in January (reftel B).

Another Journalist Beaten

[1](#)4. (C) On September 13 "Ayan" Newspaper editor-in-chief Javid Alasgaroglu was beaten unconscious and thrown into a garbage dump. Alasgaroglu's family reported that he went outside to smoke at approximately 2 a.m. and when he did not return his brother went looking for him. Alasgaroglu was hospitalized

with serious injuries, although he has now been released. The victim and his family told the media that they believe the attack is related to Alasgaroglu's journalistic activities, including recent articles he has written which were critical of government officials in the Masalli District. In particular, the head of the water depot is currently suing Alasgaroglu over an article he wrote. The Embassy cannot confirm the reason for the attack, however.

New Twist in Jailed Journalist Ganimat Zahidov's Case

15. (C) On September 20 Sevgilada Guliyeva, who was the key witness for the government in the trial of journalist Ganimat Zahidov, was arrested and charged with possession of heroin and theft. Guliyeva provided testimony as the alleged main victim in the criminal case against Azadliq editor-in-chief Ganimat Zahidov in 2007, for which Zahidov remains in prison.

During the trial, Guliyeva stated that Zahidov verbally abused her, after which her friend Vusal Hasanov defended her. Zahidov was also accused of beating Hasanov. Embassy and other international observers saw violations of international standards during the trial, and believe that these charges were politically motivated. During the trial defense lawyers and media brought forward evidence of Guliyeva's past criminal activities in order to bring doubt on her story. Her arrest now has encouraged Zahidov's lawyers to prepare an appeal for reconsideration of the case.

Businessman Forced to Subscribe to First Family's Magazine

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16. (C) According to a local businessman, Azerbaijani banks, state agencies, and other businesses are being forced to subscribe to "Baku" magazine, which is published by President Aliyev's daughter Leyla Aliyeva in Moscow. EmbOff spoke to a local businessman who explained that a Ministry of Taxes official asked him to purchase five subscriptions to this magazine, at a cost of more than 500 AZN (617 USD). The businessman agreed to purchase one subscription for himself, but refused to pay for four others. The Ministry official, with whom the businessman had a good relationship, explained that he had to get five subscriptions to the magazine from this business, or the official would be fired. When the businessman still refused to pay for the other four subscriptions, the official agreed to pay for them himself. The magazine, which is published in Russian and covers cultural topics only, is omnipresent in Azerbaijani banks, hotels, and other businesses, even in the rural regions of Azerbaijan where knowledge of Russian is low. Rumors about forced subscriptions to government-owned publications are abundant in Azerbaijan, but this is the first time Embassy officials have been able to confirm a specific case.

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